1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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escape these currents are unmixed with this and therefore called "white sand." On these same currents float the pieces of pumice-stone that the natives use for various purposes, including the removal of superfluous hair from their chins, while from the island of Ambrim itself is brought in canoes the hard volcanic stone from which rain-stones (see Plate XXIV, 1) are carved. The Ambrim volcano plays, moreover, a very active part in beliefs concerning the home of the dead held in the Small Islands, whence (though Vao, the most northerly of these islets, lies forty miles away) all the dead of high rank are said to journey down the east coast of Malekula and over the ten-mile strait to Ambrim, where they climb up to the crater and there for evermore dance every night and rest sleeping by day. Rivers in fact goes so far as to suggest that the presence of volcanoes such as this and others in Melanesia may to some extent have determined the settlement of early migrants from other volcanic areas having similar beliefs.

Like all New Hebridean islands, however, apart from the smoke sometimes issuing from the crater and the accompanying dull red glow which is by no means always present, Ambrim, as well as the opposing Malekulan coast, wears the monotonous dark green mantle of bush growing right down to the water's edge, showing no sign of the life going on in the native villages which it engulfs. At most points approach is dangerous even at a distance, owing to the treacherous reefs that jut out sometimes far into the sea. On one of these, sprawling out from the Malekulan promontory of Bong-na-un near Pangkumu, there stands a giant upright coral block, which, according to the belief held in some of the Small Islands, represents the Guardian Ghost waiting to devour the ghosts of the dead unless propitiated with the gift of a pig, which in turn is the ghost of one sacrificed by surviving kinsmen at the dead man's grave.[1] It is from here that, having passed this ordeal, the dead man gathers fuel with which to light a beacon to attract the attention of the ghostly ferryman on Ambrim who will conduct him to the opposite shore, and any small pieces of driftwood or dried banana skins that may be seen floating off it are said by the natives to be his canoes.

After this, the heavy coastline continues unrelieved by islands till a long low promontory stretching out into the sea encloses a wide mangrove shark-infested swamp behind which, in the low foothills, are said to live sorcerers called Ghamba Lep,[2] capable of flight and of assuming the shape of snakes and other things and of so harming the dwellers of the mainland villages.

[1] This is the belief held in Atchin and Wala which contrasts with the Vao belief (see p. 13) that the Guardian Ghost is met with in the cave. For further information on this see pp. 227, 233.

[2] See p. 238.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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PLATE XX

142
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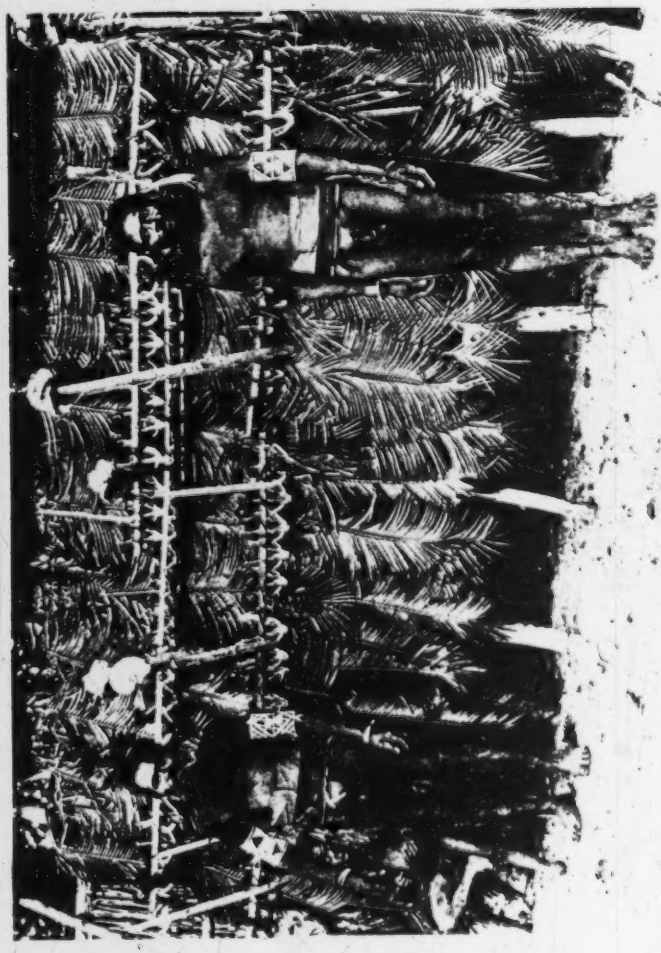

Racks displaying the tusked jaws of boars sacrificed at the consecration of a whaler at the village of Emil Parav on Atchin. The two men are joint "owners" of the "canoe." Two of their arm badges bear the design called *urna*, seen also in Fig. 84

[Facing p. 468]